

Fear: *Xenophobia (fear of strangers) doesn't benefit anyone unless you're playing high-stakes Scrabble.*
—Dennis Miller, American comedian.

The "Ohana" or extended family concept is not limited to Hawaii

Corps family answers when called

*Story by Gloria Stanley, Far East District,
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After hearing the phrase "corps family," have you wondered if the Corps really is that close? If so, your doubts will dissolve after reading how people from the Kansas City (KCD) and Far East Districts (FED) worked together in support of the Keast family.

When Mark Keast left his job as a civil engineer in the KCD for an assignment in Korea two years ago, he had no idea he would return to the District as soon as he did, and especially not under the circumstances that led to his return. Nor did he realize the response he would receive from his former team members and friends.

Mark and his two children, Michelle and Ryan, had journeyed back to Missouri for a short vacation. Sandra, his wife, remained in Korea where she had just started a new job. As Mark and the children drove across southwest Missouri to the resort area of Branson, their plans changed abruptly: a pickup truck crossed the highway center line and crashed head-on into their automobile.

Mark and Michelle were rushed by ambulance to a Springfield hospital. Ryan, who had been sitting in the back seat, went via Lifeflight medical helicopter and was operated on immediately because of an intestine torn by the seatbelt. Mark and Michelle also were seriously injured and Mark was put into a medically induced coma for three weeks as part of his treatment. He had two broken legs, a broken arm, two broken ribs and a punctured lung. Michelle, in the front seat with her Dad, sustained a broken ankle and a fractured left femur. Finding out about the accident from her brother, Sandra Keast left Korea immediately on a 17-hour flight to be with her husband and children.

With news of the wreck, KCD employees quickly rallied to help their former teammate. Bill McFarland, the District's point-of-contact, working with Lt. Col. William E. Ryan, the deputy district engineer; Jerry Adams, executive assistant; Cliff Shaw and Janie Cavitt, office of counsel; and Clarissa Grill, of the human resources office, contacted Sandra and two members of the FED—Frank Doyle, construction division, and Jeoffrey Mueller, office of counsel—to determine both the immediate and future needs of the Keasts and how best to meet them. KCD quickly

dubbed this group Team KEAST, for Keasts' Extraordinary Assistance Strategy Team.

Upon regaining consciousness, Mark Keast indicated that because his rehabilitation needs would be long-term, he desired reassignment to his former district rather than return to Korea. Coordinating with the family and Corps personnel in Korea, Team KEAST worked to achieve the transfer, and to obtain power of attorney that would allow Sandra to return their car and household goods from Korea and negotiate closure of the lease on their Korea apartment—no small task.

FED willingly met these challenges. Doyle became the Korea point-of-contact and obtained medical records from the 121st Hospital and school records from the American School in Seoul. Mueller assisted in the process of obtaining power of attorney for Sandra and worked out legal questions concerning Mark's pay, leave, and transfer from FED to KCD. He also resolved the family's apartment lease obligations and utility bills.

Linda Sapulo-Warner, Sandra's co-worker, helped to pack up the Keasts' household goods and personal belongings. Gordon Cheatham, another co-worker, assisted in getting their car shipped to St. Louis, Mo. Richard Brown and Mary Beth Martinez of the 8th Army Personnel office, and T. S. Kim of the housing office were invaluable processing the necessary paperwork.

"This story is clear evidence that the Corps is indeed a family. And, that that family is there when one of its members needs help," said Mueller.

The story doesn't end there. In Kansas City, the need was to renovate the Keasts' home, occupied by renters for two years. The call went out. On a Saturday morning, 17 District employees, together with Sandra's parents, Loren and Elizabeth Kling, and brother, David, took it upon themselves to help. Some looked at the possibility of making several interior and exterior renovations to accommodate wheelchair access. Others repainted the inside of the house, did general cleaning and worked in the yard.

Today, the children are attending school in Shawnee Mission, Kan., a suburb of Kansas City. Michelle is no longer on crutches. Mark, who was transferred from Springfield to a rehabilitation center in Kansas City, is now home, walking with crutches. He did get reassigned to KCD in September.

The Corps' family is indeed close. Just ask the Keasts.